

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University

DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU

School of Theology and Seminary Faculty
Publications

School of Theology and Seminary

4-1-2002

"Review of *Der weise König Salomo: Eine Studie zu den Erzählungen von der Weisheit Salomos in ihrem alttestamentlichen und altorientalischen Kontext*"

Dale Launderville OSB

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, dlaunderville@csbsju.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/sot_pubs



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Launderville, Dale. Review of *Der weise König Salomo: Eine Studie zu den Erzählungen von der Weisheit Salomos in ihrem alttestamentlichen und altorientalischen Kontext*, by Stefan Wälchi. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, vol. 64 issue 2 (2002): 363-364.

Originally published in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, <https://catholicbiblical.org/publications/cbq>.

BOOK REVIEWS 363

“in that day”). W. attributes key elements of this structure to three separate phases in the growth of the book. Which redactional effort produced this chiasm and to what rhetorical purpose? Similarly, W.’s analysis of the fourth (Isaianic) redaction of Micah would be strengthened by a discussion accounting for apparent tension within this layer of materials regarding whether Israel’s relation to the nations will be bellicose or benevolent.

In sum, W. makes a significant contribution to the debate over the shape and shaping of Micah. Its major flaw lies outside W.’s responsibility. At this price, most potential readers will await its arrival at the circulation desk of the nearest theological library.

Mark E. Biddle, Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Richmond, VA 23227

STEFAN WÄLCHI, *Der weise König Salomo: Eine Studie zu den Erzählungen von der Weisheit Salomos in ihrem alttestamentlichen und altorientalischen Kontext* (BWA[N]T 141/8, 1; Stuttgart/Berlin/Cologne: Kohlhammer, 1999). Pp. 263. Paper DM 79,60.

In this dissertation, completed for the *evangelische-theologische* faculty of the University of Bern in 1996, Wälchi aims to reconstruct the literary-historical context from which the biblical picture of the wise king Solomon arose. The first half of the book consists primarily of source and redaction criticism of these passages from 1 Kings 3–11: the dream revelation at Gibeon (3:1-15); the judgment concerning the two women claiming to be the mother of the living rather than of the dead child (3:16-28); the description of the types of Solomon’s wisdom (5:9-14); the account of Solomon’s treaty with Hiram of Tyre (5:15-26); and the visit of the Queen of Sheba (10:1-13). W. also briefly examines other texts referring to Solomon’s wisdom: 1 Kgs 2:1-9; 10:23-25; 11:41. In the second half of the book, W. constructs a probable portrait of an ideal wise king in the ancient Near East from Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Canaanite texts, and then compares the wise Solomon to this ideal wise king. The wise Solomon depicted in 1 Kings 3–11 is a discerning judge, a composer of proverbs, a possessor of encyclopedic wisdom, and an adept businessman with wealth and social skills. W.’s study makes a credible case for how this portrait of the wise Solomon might have emerged in the biblical tradition by identifying its authors and editors in their sociopolitical contexts.

Wälchi employs a source-critical method in his literary analysis of the passages listed above. By finding tensions and seams in these passages and cross-referencing vocabulary, W. carefully dissects these passages and then combines the parts to form the following main layers in 1 Kings 3–11: a pre-Deuteronomistic Solomonic history (SG) and two Deuteronomistic layers (DtrH and DtrN). The primary contribution of this study is W.’s reconstruction of SG, which he describes as a collection of diverse material of both oral (e.g., the story concerning the two women) and written (e.g., the administrative lists) origin. W. claims that DtrH, either an individual or a group with a common ideology, selected materials from SG when writing the DtrH edition of 1 Kings 3–11. Associating the author of SG with the royal court of Jerusalem, where international wisdom materials and traditions would have been communicated, W. situates the composition of SG in the court of Hezekiah in the late eighth century B.C.

Wälchi pictures DtrH as an editor sympathetic to the institution of kingship who regards Solomon as a legitimate heir to David’s throne in line with Nathan’s oracle in 2 Samuel 7 and as a king divinely endowed with wisdom. Despite this generally favorable

assessment, DtrH criticizes Solomon for acquiring too many horses, too much wealth, and too many wives. In contrast to this qualified acceptance of Solomon's kingship, DtrN reveals his decidedly antimonarchical bias in his condemnation of Solomon's subjection of the Israelites to forced labor (1 Kgs 9:1-9). W. argues that SG, by including the account of the secession of the northern tribes at the time of Solomon's son Rehoboam (1 Kings 12), deflects criticism of Solomon's forced labor practices onto his son Rehoboam. The inexperienced Rehoboam heeded the advice of young, arrogant counselors and planned to increase unreasonably the burden of forced labor on the Israelites, whereas Solomon had only commanded difficult forced labor to the extent that it was required for the building of the temple and other legitimate public building projects.

Wälchi selected particular texts from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Canaan in order to develop a paradigm of the ideal wise king in the ancient Near East. In the Egyptian royal eulogies, the pharaoh, as son of Re, served as a mediator between heaven and earth, and so brought balance into sociopolitical relationships. In Mesopotamian royal hymns, annals, and inscriptions, kings from the Ur III and Isin periods were regarded as endowed with divine wisdom that upheld justice; this may well have been a factor in their writing their names with the divine determinative. In Canaanite inscriptions, the kings Azitawadda and Panamua were extolled for their wisdom and righteousness. W. then compares Solomon of 1 Kings 3-11—the only OT king praised as a wise king—to this ideal wise king in the ancient Near East. The Psalms, which identify a number of traits of a king that can be labeled wisdom characteristics, do not go so far as to create a portrait of an ideal wise king such as can be found in Mesopotamian royal hymns devoted to a king like Shulgi.

According to W., the biblical portrait of the wise Solomon was largely drawn up in the time of Hezekiah. Nevertheless, some of the accounts (e.g., the visit of the Queen of Sheba) may reflect the historical Solomon as a wise king. But W. concludes that the view of Solomon as a wise king who promoted the study of international wisdom to promote the enlightened functioning of his royal government was one that probably arose only in the eighth century, when the royal bureaucracy in Jerusalem would have been sufficiently developed.

This careful redaction-critical study is an important contribution to our understanding of the theme of the ideal wise king in the OT. W. includes two appendixes with translations of OT and ancient Near Eastern texts undergirding his study. He also includes a bibliography and indexes of authors and biblical texts.

Dale Launderville, O.S.B., Saint John's University, Collegeville, MN 56321

CAREY ELLEN WALSH, *The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel* (HSM 60; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000). Pp. ix + 294. \$29.95.

This is a remarkably fine work on the subject of the cultivation of vines and the making of wine in the life and culture of ancient Israel. It is a reworking of a Harvard Ph.D. dissertation (1996), and the author is to be congratulated on an excellent piece of research and an attractive and readable presentation. Walsh seeks to bridge what she perceives to be an interpretive gap between traditional biblical scholarship and well-founded historical

